

E = (mc)² Energy = (milk*cereal)²!

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I'm sure you have seen the signs and advertisements: "Back to School". Well, school supplies and new clothes are not all you need to think about. The next time you are at the Commissary, stock up on healthy and fun foods for breakfast.

Your body and brain is a high performance vehicle. You wouldn't run your car on soda and candy, would you? No, I didn't think so. Don't run your brain on it either. Your system needs high-octane fuel – nutritious foods to power up your body and brain. Eating breakfast is premium fuel for your day.

It has been proven that eating a healthy breakfast helps you wake up, stay alert longer, and do better at schoolwork and tests. And of course, nutritious foods fuels top physical performance. Don't run your engine on junk food. Eat breakfast and rev up your day!

Whatever food we eat gets digested and broken down into more simple forms – the primary one being glucose (or simple sugar). The metabolic by-product that fuels our brain is glucose. By the time we wake up in the morning, our body is in a fasting state and therefore runs on a decreased metabolic rate (the rate at which the body uses energy or blood glucose). If you skip breakfast, not only do you prolong your fasting state, but you also decrease the amount of blood glucose fueling your brain.

There has been significant research studying the effects eating breakfast has on overall school performance. Omitting breakfast affects the performance on specific cognitive tasks, particularly those involving memory and interferes with cognition and learning.

Studies have shown that eating breakfast resulted in:

- Significant increases in scores on assessment tests – especially reading and math
- Increase in grades – especially math
- Increased attention span
- Decreases in the number of visits to the school nurse
- Improved classroom behavior
- Decreases in student absences and tardiness
- Decreases in the number of disciplinary incidents at school

Now that we know how important breakfast is, what we eat is also important. Cereal is one of the primary contributors to children's energy, carbohydrate, and fiber intakes as well as intakes of most vitamins and minerals. Cereals consumed with low fat milk and topped with fruit, in turn increase the intake of calories, calcium, fiber, and other nutrients.

Other healthy and fun breakfast food options to consider:

- Piece of peanut butter toast and a shake made with low fat milk, juice, and fruit
- Low fat yogurt mixed with granola and fruit
- Hot cereal (oatmeal, cream of wheat, etc) mixed with low fat milk and served with fruit
- Low fat breakfast proteins (Canadian bacon, turkey sausage, etc) served with waffles or pancakes, fruit, and low fat milk

While you are planning ahead for your children to start school, make sure there are plenty of healthy breakfast items for them to choose from. Even if you get a late start to your day, pack a granola bar, toaster pastry, french toast sticks, etc for them to eat on the run.

Remember – Eat Smart and Start Your School Day with Breakfast!